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UbD/DI Ch. 3 + 4

**Chapter 3**

This chapter reveals the truth behind what a few current educators have vented to me about over the course of my college career. With all of the content that is expected to be covered in the short amount of time teachers actually have with their students, even the most enthusiastic and dedicated teachers can easily get bogged down when attempting to meet the state and federal standards. With such a vast array of content to cover, many educators find that what they are teaching tends to be “a mile wide and an inch deep”. The reality of this is frightening, especially to microscopes like myself, who personally understand the importance of diving deeper into course content to find the real meaning behind what is being taught.

As I reflect on my largest concerns about my own abilities, it is the ability to organize an entire curriculum and make it fit. However, the concept of “planning backward” brings light to this situation. Not only does it organize a rational way to cover a massive curriculum, but it also provides a way to emphasize critical thinking for key components of the content or the “big ideas”.

**Chapter 4**

One concept about differentiating instruction that really stuck out to me in this chapter stated: “It is the case in many classrooms now that teachers attempt to ‘differentiate’ instruction by giving struggling students less to do and… advanced students more to do than other learners” (p.41). I can recall seeing this pitfall time and time again throughout my own educational experiences. Even recently at MBHS, where students are grouped into classes according to their “ability level”, I have witnessed this type of “differentiated” instruction and the negative effects of it. Students considered to be “low-performing” come into the classroom already struggling with the content area are then given assignments that lack any critical thinking opportunities to expand their understanding and instead spoon-fed the content from a projector and instructed to copy it down onto their study guides. Once this was done, the test was handed out and students used the information they just copied on a study guide to fill out the test. A minority students at least found the value of accepting the “easy-A” and did the work while others were so disengaged that they couldn’t care about the content or their grade enough to even copy and paste the information a couple times and ace the test. This vividly illustrates the need for differentiating instruction as described in the chapter. Such concepts as: establishing clarity about curricular essentials, accepting responsibility for learner success, developing communities of respect, and other core principles of the chapter were completely ignored in this classroom and the evidence of it was portrayed openly by the student’s body language and actions. The student’s looked as though they had no idea why they were even there, openly expressed negative attitudes towards each other and the class, and when I attempted to reflect with my mentor later as to why such things were happening, he was able to sum it up by saying “this is a very-low performing group”. My hope is that by understanding this chapter and sharing that experience with you guys, it becomes evident to us that, in the very least, NOT implementing some of these instructional techniques and practices can have devastating effects on the educational system, and more importantly the students themselves.